

Rhizome

Updates from the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism

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Bearing Witness to Release Book with Plough Publishing

The Bearing Witness Stories Project and Plough Publishing eagerly await the publication of *Bearing Witness: Stories of Martyrdom and Costly Discipleship* on March 1, 2015.

Featuring stories from the early church through the present day, this collection represents the first print publication inspired by the Bearing Witness Stories Project.

Since the birth of Christianity, the church has commemorated

those who suffered for their faith. Stories of the boldness and steadfastness of early Christian and Reformation-era martyrs have been handed down from one generation to the next through books such as Thielemann van Braght's *Martyrs Mirror* (1660).

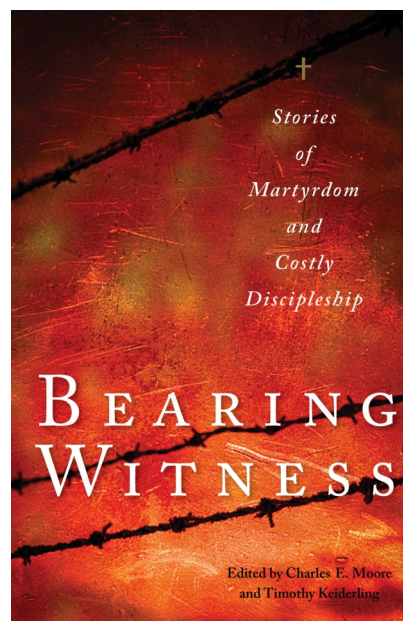
For this particular project, Plough editors used the framework adopted by the ISGA's Bearing Witness Stories Project, focusing their selections on Anabaptist martyrs and others

who have suffered for their commitment to believer's baptism and nonviolence in the way of Jesus.

Together the stories provide a complex and diverse portrait of costly discipleship and Christian faithfulness.

For more information about the book's contents and pricing, please see: <http://www.plough.com/en/topics/faith/witness/bearing-witness-stories-of-martyrdom>.

GOSHEN COLLEGE
INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF GLOBAL ANABAPTISM



Featured stories:

Early Christians: Stephen, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Agathonica, Papyrus, Carpus, Perpetua, Tharacus, Probus, Andronicus, and Marcellus

Radical Reformers: Jan Hus, Michael and Margaretha Sattler, Weynken Claes, William Tyndale, Jakob and Katharina Hutter, Anna Janz

Early Modern Stories: Veronika Löhans, Jacob Hochstetler, Gnadenhütten, Joseph and Michael Hofer, Emanuel Swartzendruber, Regina Rosenberg, Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, Johann Kornelius Martens, Ahn Ei Sook, Jakob Rempel

Recent Stories: Clarence Jordan, Richard and Sabina Wurmbbrand, Tulio Pedraza, Stanimir Katanic, Samuel Kakesa, Kasai Kapata, Meserete Kristos Church of Ethiopia, Sarah Corson, Alexander Men, José Chuquín, Norman Tattersall, Katherine Wu, and members of Ekkesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria

Peggy Gish Shares Stories of EYN

On December 16 the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism brought together Mennonites and Brethren from northern Indiana to learn more about the suffering and witness of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria—EYN).

Peggy Gish, member of the Church of the Brethren (U.S.) and a long-time Christian Peacemaker Team member in Iraq, traveled from her home in Ohio to Goshen, Indiana, to present a reflection based on several months she spent with EYN in the spring of 2015.

“What does a peace church—a church that seeks to be faithful to Jesus—do when they are hunted down, when their people are killed en masse?” asked Gish in the opening of her presentation. “How do they respond?”

Measuring the damage

The EYN, whose membership numbered one million in 2009, is an Anabaptist church committed to peace and nonviolence. Since 2009, however, they have faced violence, displacement and threat from Boko Haram, an extremist Islamic group whose territory in northeastern Nigeria is also home to the majority of EYN members and churches.

Between 8,000 and 10,000 EYN members have been killed by Boko Haram, including many pastors, and thousands more have been displaced.

The most intense period of suffering occurred in 2013 and 2014. In April of 2014 the high profile kidnapping of nearly 300 schoolgirls from the Chibok school raised international concern; nearly two-thirds of the girls were from families belonging to EYN.



When Boko Haram attacked and occupied EYN headquarters and Kulp Bible College in Kwarhi on October 29, 2014, EYN staff and Kulp students fled, leaving the church in disarray. Meanwhile tens of thousands of EYN members had already been displaced and over 1,500 church buildings destroyed.

Yet numbers do not tell the whole story. “Our purpose [this evening] is to put stories and faces to the statistics,” said ISGA Director John D. Roth in his introductory remarks.

Stories of trauma

While in Nigeria Gish attended a number of trauma-healing workshops offered by EYN

and heard many tragic stories of suffering from this period— injury, death, displacement, kidnapping and sexual violence. She now gives presentations in North America based on the stories she heard.

“My purpose,” said Gish, “is to give a face to the people there.”

Gish shared the story of Moniqua Dna, who witnessed the execution of her husband and two sons, before Boko Haram militants sliced her throat and left her for dead. Although neighbors found her alive the next morning, today she bears the physical scars of extensive reconstructive surgery and the even deeper emotional scars from the trauma she has suffered.

Moniqua’s story was one assault among thousands. In the midst of such human destruction, EYN seemed on the brink of extinction.

“When all this was happening,” said Gish, “and when the headquarters was attacked...They were telling me, ‘We thought this was the end of EYN.’”

Nonviolent response

Yet EYN largely responded nonviolently. A historically pacifist church, EYN representatives discussed and officially affirmed maintaining a nonviolent stance in the face of Boko Haram.

Markus and Janada Gamanche, for example, continue to host around fifty displaced church members in their home in the city of Jos, despite the stress

For more information on Peggy Gish and her experiences accompanying the EYN, see her website at plottingpeace.com and her article “[Learning to Love Boko Haram: A Peace Church Responds](#)” in the October issue of *Plough Quarterly*.

For additional information on EYN, see www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis/ and blog.brethren.org/category/nigeria/.

SangMin Lee Reflects on Time in Prison

Sang-Min Lee, the South Korean Mennonite conscientious objector so many of you were praying for, visited the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and Goshen College on December 8, as part of a longer visit in the United States.

In April of 2014, SangMin was sentenced to eighteen months in prison for his faith-based refusal to fulfill the required military service; he was released a few months early, in July of 2015.

Over tea and coffee, SangMin reflected on his time in prison and the impact of the international support he received. “I received so many letters from all over the world!” he said.

Following his sentencing the ISGA’s Bearing Witness Stories Project and Justapaz organized an international letter-writing campaign intended to encourage SangMin during his time in prison. Mennonite World Conference also invited global church members to pray for SangMin and to write to him. Of course, SangMin’s congregation in Seoul, Grace and Peace Mennonite Church, was another crucial locus of support for him during this time and delivered the letters SangMin received by email.

SangMin kept all of the letters with him in his prison cell. As the stack grew, one of the guards finally confronted him. “Who are you?!?” asked the guard. “Why do you get so many letters from outside of Korea?”

Most meaningful to SangMin were the letters he received from conscientious objectors in Colombia.

As in Korea, military service is obligatory in Colombia. And

although there is a legal conscientious objection option, Colombian COs face an unpredictable legal process and significant difficulties in finishing their education and finding employment. SangMin was amazed that Colombian COs, in the midst of their own challenges and uncertainties, would seek to comfort and pray for him!

While in prison SangMin was able to work as a barber, first cutting the hair of his fellow inmates and eventually of the guards and administrative staff.



SeongHan Kim and SangMin Lee join faculty and staff at the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and Goshen College for tea and conversation on December 8, 2015.

When he shared his story in the barber shop, SangMin was encouraged that many of his clients expressed unease with the current system of sending COs to prison for their objection to mandatory military service.

SangMin continues to face challenges because of his CO status. Although he holds a degree in childhood education, he is barred from teaching because of his criminal record. Instead he is focusing his attention on a career in bike mechanics.

Peggy Gish, cont.

this adds to their family life. Other EYN members have earned the respect of Boko Haram fighters by the love they show to their neighbors, both Muslim and Christian. Still others work directly in interreligious ministries among individuals of the two faiths.

Furthermore, in the trauma workshops EYN offers, members have the opportunity to share with each other and to begin rebuilding relationships of trust.

Nigerian government forces have pushed back Boko Haram’s territory, allowing some EYN members to return to what remains of their homes. The workshops consequently offer participants tools for the emotional processes involved in returning: how to deal with neighbors, how to rebuild trust, etc.

Workshop participants also read Scripture and study the process of forgiveness in light of their experiences. Even though

forgiveness is a long and complex journey, participants frequently express a desire to begin that process as they return home.

“[It was] a horrific and trying time,” said Gish, referring to the peak of violence in 2013 and 2014. “People are saying, ‘We’ve gone through hell.’ But it has strengthened us and our love for each other and our commitment to the way of Jesus and nonviolence and peace.”

EMERGING ANABAPTISM IN KOREA

By John D. Roth, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism

On January 20-24, I visited South Korea for the first time, thanks to an invitation from Bock Ki Kim. Kim is director of the Korea Anabaptist Center and a key leader in the emerging Anabaptist movement there.

The official reason for the visit was to participate as a speaker in the first ever Korean Anabaptist Conference, an ecumenical gathering of scholars, pastors and laypeople organized by Kim and others as an effort “to introduce Anabaptist theology and values in a public, academic setting” and to “challenge ourselves as Korean Anabaptists to see who we are and what we have to do in South Korea.”

But there were lots of other things happening in the Korean Anabaptist movement as well. Jesus Village Church, one of the oldest Anabaptist-related congregations in South Korea and a key promoter of the Korea Anabaptist Center, had just celebrated its 20th anniversary as a congregation.

The Dae Jang Gan Press, which has overseen the translation and publication of scores of Anabaptist-Mennonite books, hosted a book launch for the Korean translation of my book *Beliefs: Mennonite Faith and Practice*. A group of diverse Mennonite,

Baptist, Presbyterian and nondenominational leaders gathered for tea to discuss the future of the Anabaptist movement.

And on Sunday, January 24, the Jesus Village Church in Chuncheon celebrated World Fellowship Sunday, a day set aside for member groups of Mennonite World Conference to commemorate the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland 491 years ago.

Considered as a percentage of the total Christian church in Korea, the number of Korean Anabaptists today is quite modest. Nonetheless, the events in January symbolized a significant moment in a remarkable renewal movement that has been gaining momentum over the past two decades.

Today, South Korea is home to one of the most creative and dynamic expressions of contemporary Anabaptism anywhere in the global church, with potential for explosive growth in the future.

Not surprisingly, the emerging Anabaptist movement in Korea—like its counterpart in the sixteenth century—is far from unified.

Some newcomers to the movement, for example, equate Anabaptism with community of goods. Others are looking for an egalitarian approach to church leadership, or a simple lifestyle, or a “small church” ecclesiology, or simply a canvas on which to imagine the possibility of “something different.”

One very conservative Baptist group recently translated selected portions of the *Martyrs Mirror* into Korean, leaving out sections that did not fit their theology. Even those congregations who have explicitly identified themselves as “Mennonites” are sorting through basic questions of ordination, child nurture, organizational structure, and polity.

Amid all these the creative and diverse currents, the future of the Anabaptist movement in Korea ultimately depends on the emergence of leaders—theologians, ethicists, historians, pastors and teachers—who will consciously continue the work of “indigenizing” Anabaptism. Clearly, the movement possesses individuals with the energy, training, commitment, and spiritual gifts needed to translate Anabaptism more fully into the Korean context.

Someday, I hope, the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism will face the challenge of translating texts from the leaders in the Korean Anabaptist movement into English for the edification of the church here. May that day come very soon!

“South Korea is home to one of the most creative and dynamic expressions of contemporary Anabaptism in the global church.”

ISGA Director John D. Roth with Korea Anabaptist Center Director Bok Ki Kim and KAC staff members. Photo by Austin Headrick.



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